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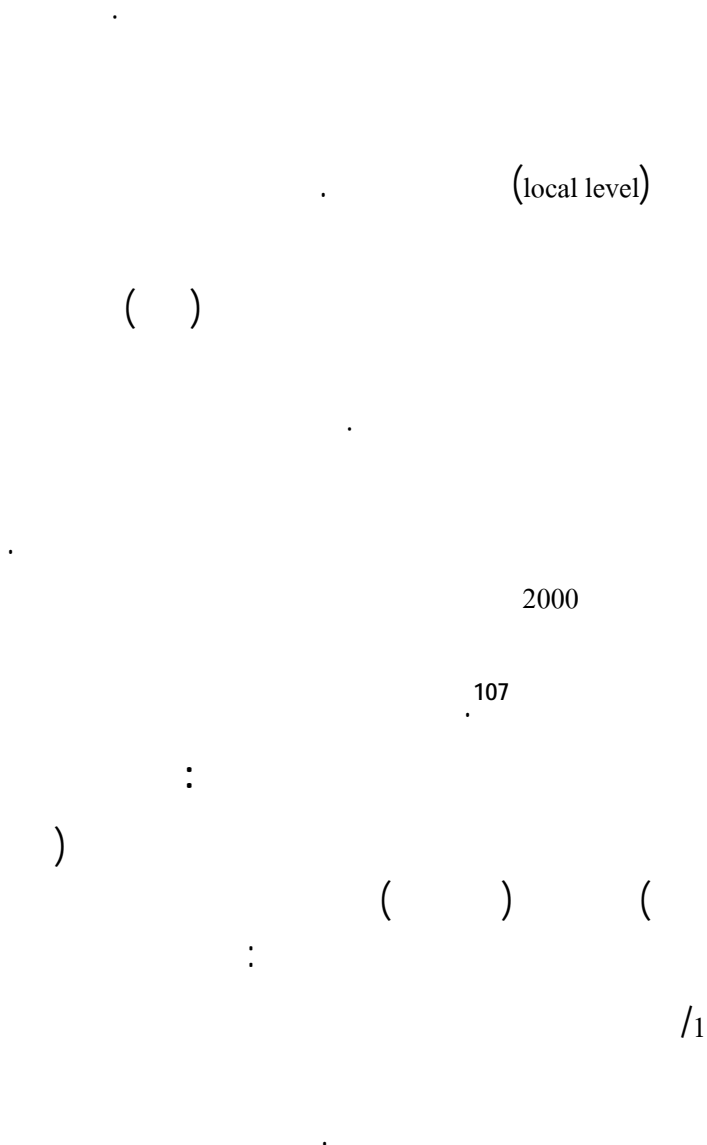
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113 Dahrendorf, Ralf: „Fundamentale und liberale Demokratie. Über Teilnahme und Initiative in der modernen Politik“. In: Dahrendorf, Ralf (Hrsg.): „Konflikt der Freiheit. Auf dem Weg zur Dienstklassengesellschaft“. München 1972, S. 225-237.

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¹¹⁷ Feist, Ursula, S. 54.

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118 www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-345/_nr-15/_p-1/i.html

119 Feist, Ursula, S. 127.

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122 European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia: "Muslims in the European Union – Discrimination and Islamophobia". Vienna 2006, p. 10.

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124 European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia.

125 European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.

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128 International Crises Group: „France and it’s Muslims: Riots, Jihadism and Dipoliticisation“. Europe Report N° 172, Paris/ Brussels 9.3.2006.

129 European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia: “Muslims in the European Union – Discrimination and Islamophobia”. Vienna 2006, p. 114.

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Kelmann, Herbert: „Sozialpsychologische Aspekte Internationalen Verhaltens“. In: Nerlich, Uwe (Hrsg.): „Krieg und Frieden im industriellen Zeitalter“. Gütersloh, 1966.

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.2000 () ()

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.29 2001 () 32 () ."

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168 Daimagüler, Mehmet: „Muslime in Deutschland: Wort zum Freitag“. In: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Frankfurt 23.6.2004.

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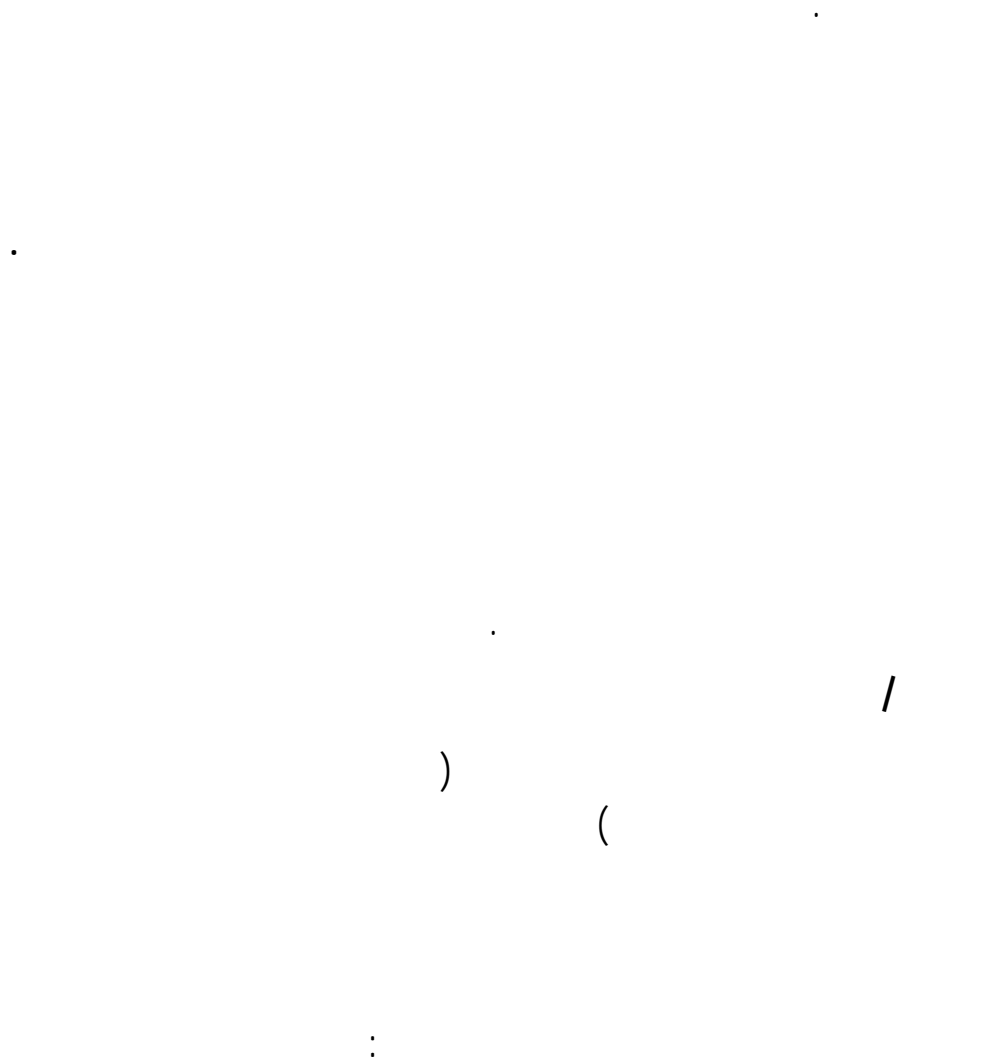
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193 www.gruene.at/menschenrechte/artikel/lesen/1225/

194 Scheibner, Herbert: „Wir brauchen keinen Klubzwang“ (Gastkommentar). Wiener Zeitung, Wien 11. November 2005.

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One of the mechanisms of developing the political participation of Europe Muslims is for it to be based on the concept of interaction between the components making the Muslim minority and the coordination between them which is the minimal reasonable level in this field. It requires embodying the unity and diversion in the Muslim community and being cautious not to cause division and any negative repercussions it may cause on the political participation.

(50)

In conclusion, the political participation of Europe's Muslims is filled with question marks and is linked to many great challenges especially that some of its aspects are related to complicated balances, based on the special characteristics of Europe's Muslims and the nature of their political arena and some accelerated developments.

The complications at hand vary in regards to their seriousness, depth and influences as well as the strength or weakness of their presence in Europe Muslims' arena.

The queries put forth today and that will remain tomorrow in the of societal and political participation inspires the impression that it is of a complicated nature, as one might find in each query aspects that require studying and investigating its backgrounds and consequences, especially that this underway participation is a renewed experience.

Of the other tools and means are organising meetings that bring together politicians and the public or their representatives, and taking part in political activities and funding political and electoral activities in a manner that does not break the law or violate moral and Islamic values and directives and achieve public interests in general. These tools and means include political media; issuing reports, memos, letters and essays; conducting researches and studies; holding conferences and discussion panels and workshops that lead to establishing institutions specialised in following up political issues.

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It is possible to identify a series of items that should be taken care of within the requirements of political work of Europe's Muslims. Of that, starting off from the right premises, depending on the right directions, defining fruitful goals and choosing the most suitable means that do not contradict the legitimate, legal and moral standards while ensuring that it goes with the prevailing societal and political customs.

Of the important demands is recognising the needs of the Muslim mass in particular, and the overall needs of the broad society in general, and mobilizing all human and material resources to serve the political participation on healthy foundation with attention to effective regulating, distributing, employing and investing of these resources.

This requires balancing between needs, potentials and aspirations to achieve a balanced performance that takes into consideration priorities and becomes subject to an ongoing development.

It is not unexpected that active experiences of societal and political participation of Europe's Muslims will rise if they lack the opportunities of participation and constructive interaction within their institutions. This internal participation is vital and what reinforces the need to it is the ability to comprehend the situation that they live in through the experiences of political and societal participation.

Institutionalisation and specialisation in the societal and political participation arena of Europe's Muslims remain a vital demand to rise with the responsibilities and respond to increasing challenges in addition to constant verification, reconditioning and development.

And of the characteristics of an active participation in the political arena is for it to enjoy an independent will apart from the other political parties in the arena which is linked to the essence of that participation.

It is important to handle carefully the minor issues that accept compromise and flexibility, especially in jostling contexts where concessions are basically expected to take place under pressure.

There is no doubt that flexibility in speech and consequent messages provides reasonable margins of movement and interaction with developments while ensuring that this does not contradict with visions and concepts or principles.

It is not unlikely that addressing weaknesses and deficiencies of speech and messages is substituted by the tendency, conscious or unconscious, to dismount visions and conceptions.

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It might be necessary to warn that the political communication speech and the resulting messages and signals are unequal in nature and specifications with the speech that can provide Muslims with the ability to take part in cultural and religious dialogue, no matter how much they have in common. But the attempt by some societal Muslim leaders in Europe to hold the reins of both speeches will weaken either one or both of them and might lead to a confusion that has dangerous repercussions during crises.

Thus varying the tools of societal action is a demand that Muslims cannot do without as it provides better chances for specialisation and widens the margins of movement and manoeuvre and offers better chances to start alliances and partnerships and cooperation on different levels. And above all it encourages the vision of a “positive integration” that Muslims barely agree on.

(48)

The means and tools to active participation in the political arena involve Muslims taking part in that arena and forming frameworks reflecting their presence in it and participating in the electoral operation and organising mass activities that carry general or specific messages to the political levels and building alliances with the political powers and non-governmental organisations or even public figures so as to increase the capability of communication or casting pressure in the political field.

Those tools and means are followed by the importance of crystallising frameworks that express Muslim interests in participation in the direct or indirect political work, and public awareness of the Muslim public on their rights and duties, including their legal rights.

So, the issue requires embracing the programmes and projects and comprehending policies and stances to which political parties move and act. This will benefit the concerned parties to direct Muslim political participation to the most suitable position in the political arena. This will not be achieved without proper directions for political work and maybe suggestions and productive opinions in the political arena's fields, without having their political presence look like a number of votes given in return for meeting certain demands.

So what is required is the ability to provide and active presence that adds to the arena and is capable of determining its potential partners and opponents.

(44)

This issue requires internal communication within the Muslim community and an interaction with the Muslim presence and its audience instead of creating gaps between the elite Muslims in the political and societal arena and the common Muslims, or even to allow these gaps to grow wider.

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One of the most important indicators of the success of Europe's Muslim integration in the public life is the interest of those who reflect Muslim presence in Europe in making outstanding stances in different fields and their ability and competence to do so to an extent that involves positive distinction on one side and societal communication on the other. More generally, we should seek to channel the political participation of Europe's Muslims in tune with the broader societal participation to open up horizons of cooperation and coordination and provide opportunities to create alliances and partnerships in addition to placing the participation of the minorities within the general societal and political equation, instead of looking out of place or standing in opposite direction from the interests and concerns of the majority.

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A careful look into aspects of the current Muslim performance in the political participation arena uncovers cases that reflect a confusing performance and even compromises made in some crucial issues or an unjustifiable acceleration in certain topics at the expense of other topics that are no less important, in a manner classified as primitive or that sacrifices rights that should not be compromised.

the public opinion and concerned parties. This should fall within the responsibilities of political participation of Europe's Muslims anyhow.

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Perhaps one of the biggest responsibilities resulting from an active participation of Europe's Muslims in the political arena is putting forth serious visions and practical programmes and putting them into practice in a serious, responsible and competent manner.

This attempt requires placing renewed agendas and urging all Europe's Muslim audience, each in their country or territory or region or area or sector, to interact with priorities, which requires clarification and awareness of the public so that the Muslim public becomes the incubator of this political participation while being careful not to isolate them from it.

What will help to achieve this is the emergence of honest and qualified institutions and political work leaders and societal communication inside the Muslim communities in Europe so that this audience votes for these institutions to represent its aspirations and interests on the broad societal and political levels. These are not easy tasks but it is important that they are carried out as much as possible.

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There is no doubt that one of the obstacles that the political participation of Europe's Muslims should counter is how to interact with the political arena without allowing this participation to become a quantum of votes that merely gives legitimacy to political act without influencing it or the ability to take part in correcting its errors.

This requires differentiating between making scattered gains or achievements on one hand and achieving an active presence in the political arena on the basis of communication, cooperation and partnership with a number of societal and political parties on the other hand, so that the outcome is not limited to minimal squandered gains but accumulating achievements in different fields.

Interaction between Muslim parties concerned with political work and the political powers and societal parties in general should not be limited to partial demands or nominal goals, i.e. to merely place candidates on electoral lists or the possibility to support a party during election campaigns, or not. The best results are achieved while communicating with these powers on deeper and stronger agendas.

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And whoever looks deeply into the reality of Muslims in west and central Europe will notice in the course, strings that link their societal and political speech and in consequent practice and communicative performance. It is worth pointing here to a number of fronts that should not be limited in a small number of examples, but what draws attention to them are two directions, the first leans towards giving precedence to dialogue and communication and proving their “good intentions” in dealing with the societal and political mediums. While those behind the second direction stand on the opposite, leaning towards contradictions, ignoring common grounds or the chances to communicate with the societal parties.

As the second direction does not provide a vision or a programme for political participation nor the societal participation, the first direction is invited to come up with options for engaging in the political and societal arenas on basics that are more understanding and critical. We can say that a third direction can be found in Europe’s Muslims’ communities. This direction realises that communication and dialogue do not require avoiding criticism of the issues at hand in the political arena, on the basis of building bridges on one side, and protecting interests and gains on the other.

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Europe’s Muslims political and societal participation should be ready to face all possible developments and should seek to make initiatives instead of being satisfied with mere reactions. Still, the general reality of Europe’s Muslim presence depends of reactions and fails to precipitate developments, which sheds the light on the importance of an early feel of potential crisis that can affect parts of Muslim rights and freedoms and limit their interests and gains.

What happens in many cases is that the interaction of some Muslims in Europe with certain files lack enthusiasm at times and maybe indifferent, until there is a situation that seems to have exceeded the limits and leads to extended campaigns that surprise the audience and the general public opinion. Here there might not be any understanding of these sudden reactions that were not preceded by continuous efforts to win the understanding of the public opinion and related sectors, including the political one. This reinforces the importance that Europe’s Muslims pay more attention to possible faults and most probably they are many, and try to deal with them and communicate with

But that is not an easy choice as it requires exerting strong efforts which comes anyway in the heart of the act of political participation whose feasibility will not be achieved easily or spontaneously.

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Rational participation in political arena requires a variation of tools and means to achieve the aspired public goals with attention to the direct pursued goals.

That demand should be accompanied by a reminder that the main requirements that make the certain tools in the political participation arena for Europe's Muslims acceptable, is the necessity that they abide by standards, Islamic guidance and legal and moral directives.

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Responsibilities resulting from Muslims' political participation include a cluster of roles and functions that should be carried out by those who are supposed to reflect that participation or embody it.

So, all Muslim parties linked to political participation are supposed to rise with this role in a comprehensive way.

These responsibilities include action within the executive, legislative and stimulating levels, as there are actions within the directive or guidance levels and others within the political and societal leadership levels. What is expected from this context is that those responsible for the political performance should be keen to bring Muslims together instead of driving them apart, and for that performance to reinforce their unity and avoid division. Also, other functions based on Muslim political participation can be identified.

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It goes without saying that societal and political participation of Europe's Muslims should achieve progress in different fields including reinforcing the ethical, virtual and moral status of Muslims and their religious attribute. In fact this is a goal based on great importance and symbolic indication but it should not rely on symbolic gains as an indicator to making real progress in the reality of political and societal participation.

If the positive symbolic steps towards the Muslims are not enough to reflect a general positive drive in dealing with the Muslim presence and its attribute then what can be confirmed is that the lack of these steps in a European country will mostly indicate that there is a lack of required interest in dealing with the Muslim presence.

attention should be directed as well to the importance of influencing the backgrounds that generate political interference in the different files so that it is not limited to "political tactics" but encompasses the strategic approaches.

Therefore, an attempt should be made to take part in solving some flaws in several aspects of the foreign European policies which sheds light on the need to review the standards and traditions that produce such policies, to learn from Europe's history and the present situation of the U.S.

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Under all circumstances, Muslims' interaction with foreign policies is a positive and desired stance and should stem from an awareness that requires continuous rationalisation so that it becomes a solid construction that is harmonious with an active societal presence. All this should be rationally orchestrated with due attention to the priorities of the Muslim presence in Europe and their numerous needs and requirements which supposedly don not, in principle, contradict with prudent interference in the foreign policies.

But the issue is not this simple as one might believe, as the lines separating the aspired interaction, and its undesired counterpart, with foreign policies are unclear in the minds of many, and most importantly there is a tangible inconsistency about them while comparing between the situation of Muslims in a European country and their situation elsewhere, and even within their presence in the same country or province. And it is unlikely that the internal argument in some Muslim communities regarding this issue is resolved.

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What is being deliberated in the political participation is not the fundamental change that is based on the "if-or" logic, but on the basis of a continuous interaction within the general public arenas.

What should also be taken into consideration is the importance of placing demands and directions into their proper context, which is a realistic indispensable condition in the pursuit to make gains or practice influence by any party in the European arena.

What should be stressed is that the choice for Europe's Muslims in the political issue is to build alliances and partnerships and seek to reach a ripe state of societal and political cooperation regarding the relevant array of concerns and interests, as well as to place Muslim's stances within the overall societal and political texture.

That increasingly progressing course might rouse queries on whether it was based on a mature nature or merely a response to surrounding developments. However, what we can at least shed light on in this field is that it might reinforce the need for frameworks specialised in political work that is linked to the interests and affairs of Europe's Muslims, including foreign policies.

Perhaps one of the challenges that can be noticed here is the possibility that a gap in foreign policies might emerge and grow wider, between the Muslim interest and expectations of the mainstream institutions of the Muslim presence in the continent and the speech and performance of these institutions.

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What becomes clearer to Europe's Muslims and Muslims in the West in general is that there is a difference between being close to the global decision making centres and the actual proximity to the course these centres take.

This issue is related to two dilemmas that might explain the reason behind the Muslims' relative disinterest in foreign policies, which are the need to realise the paths of foreign policies and their mechanisms and influential parties, on one hand, and the ability to access these paths and influence them on the other.

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A clear tendency is detected amidst Europe's Muslims communities in Europe to bring forward their role in developing the relation between the continent and the Muslim world. What might also draw attention is that a new face of dealing with foreign policies is emerging in the reality of Muslim presence in Europe. It is related to their role as mediators between Europe and the Islamic world especially under the new developments or crises.

As some Muslims in Europe believe that their moral responsibility pushes them to try and bridge the gap between Europe and the Islamic world, politicians in European countries might also see a vital role for Muslims in Europe in handling the relation with the Islamic world.

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It can be noticed while addressing foreign policy issues that the importance level of Europe's Muslims interaction with these policies might vary according to time and place.

What reduces the aspired achievements is limiting the European interaction with the foreign policies to interference in this file or the other, as

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An important factor that clearly influenced directing Muslims to the domestic policies of their European countries was the discrimination problem and the rise of the far right politics as well as the emergence of the xenophobia speech in general and Muslims in particular especially on the political arena.

But this does not always mean that the racial challenge or the anti-foreigners and Muslims speech and the “Islamofobia” wave are vital enough to urge Muslims to take on more political role as it might cause negative reactions and lead to the abortion of some attempts to encourage positive participation in their communities and European environments. As a matter of fact it is expected to cause both negative and positive reactions within the same Muslim environment in Europe. Here, the importance is clear again of the local role of the Muslim opinion leaders, like the Imams and influential Muslim personalities to urge positive reactions from the Muslim audience and to minimize the chances of isolation. The availability of a tangible political participation options for the Muslim audience would be an encouraging factor to mingle and positively interact with the political affair. What will also help is the presence of parties that are open to Muslims, deals with them positively and are ready to start alliances and partnership with them in all fields.

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We can point to another factor which is likely to affect the relative recess in Muslim interest in their countries’ foreign policies is their interest in the broader societal issues.

Even for Muslim societies and institutions, shifting attention to foreign policies might not look as an appropriate choice in the normal situations. It is expected that many of those institutions will find it difficult to tackle foreign policy affairs directly especially that those affairs are dominated by unruly conflict of interest by some international political parties, which is not consistent with the general climate that local Muslim parties would find that it might control the internal communication in their European societies.

Thus it is understood that many Islamic institutions would feel that they have to distance themselves from that track that does not go in harmony with their speech, especially with the conflict driven international relations which on one part takes the nature of renouncing and repudiating anything that has been unjustifiably linked to Islam, Islamic culture and Muslims, and the refusal to delve into the “tiring” foreign policy follow-ups, on the other part.

wide difference in evaluation between the parties' foreign and national policies, which is even a contradicting factor at times.

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There are reasons that support the assumptions that Europe's Muslims are more interested in foreign policies of their European countries in comparison to the general concern of the European societies in those policies.

We can clearly detect an interesting shift in the Muslim voters' attention towards their evaluation of the stances of political parties and the possibility to choose between them in many European and Western countries since the mid 90s. Most of the times, the interest of these parties in foreign affairs came ahead of domestic and other policies. And eventually, there was an inclination to market foreign policies along with a more comprehensive vision of the wider political field including the domestic policies of those parties.

This reflects the crystallization of a wider vision amongst Europe's Muslims in the political affair and the growing local challenges facing the Muslim presence in the continent, in addition to the emergence of an independent "personality" or character for that presence, with the rise of the second and third generations in all courses of Muslim life in Europe. This does not always mean a substantial retrieve in the interest of foreign policy especially with the heated debate on the fiery cases in the Islamic world.

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In addition to the interest in the foreign policy, there are other concerns that force an increasing presence of Europe's Muslims in national policies. The rise in attention to domestic policies amongst Europe's Muslims follows the relative success they achieved in political participation on the local level, such as municipalities and district elections.

Despite the progress of interest in the local level, there are no indications that Europe's Muslims feel they can influence their countries' foreign policies, which reinforces the shift of their attention towards the local arena. Their despair of the possibility of a serious interaction with foreign policies also comes from the fact that competition between candidates and parties during election campaigns focuses mostly on domestic and not foreign affairs, excluding some curves such as the elections that were held during Iraq's occupation war in 2003 in some European countries.

with the parallel tensions and crises, in addition to wars whose main victims were Muslims. New countries have emerged from these transformations during the final decade of the 20th century.

The Muslim presence in Eastern Europe finds itself part of an environment whose political culture was completely reshaped; as a matter of fact the reshaping operation is still ongoing in many fields, socially and politically.

Muslims' political participation in many eastern European countries has indications and dimensions that are clearly different from the nature of that participation in the continents' western and central parts.

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One of the most substantial problems regarding Europe's Muslims political work is the lack of awareness among a number of Muslim sectors on the political map and its depth in the European arena as no policies of a political party or government can attain positive indicators in all fields.

Evaluating how much a political party is consistent with the Muslim voters' preferences or the reasons behind their political participation should be carried out according to the party's visions, programmes and positions from fundamental issues:

- The party's background, speech and general outline.
- The general domestic policies, as in the health, education, youths' needs and social care policies.
- Domestic policies related to Muslims or minorities, immigrants and foreigners in general, such as the issue of minorities rights, residency laws and discrimination.
- Issues related to foreign policies.

In fact, conflicting impressions that Muslims get from the policies of some governments or parties have caused confusion in the ranks of Europe's Muslims in many cases. It was difficult for them to take the right position toward these policies. One of the confusing factors is the foreign policies that usually acquire a different nature from the domestic policies, in addition to the fact that the foreign policy does not assume a notable rank during election campaigns around Europe.

Muslim voters often face some problems in some European countries in terms of comparing between the political options on the table, as there is a

out by occupation troops in Palestine and the protests against waging war in Iraq that started in the fall of 2002. But what was clear in these cases and others was focussing efforts on mass political actions or the traditional media stances.

It was also clear that Muslims' political performance has taken a seasonal characteristic in many European arenas as there were no frameworks or tools that provided Muslims with the "professional" political communication in most European countries despite some advanced experiences in a small number of countries and in limited cases.

Although there was interest in some casual developments that did not take place under crises such as election campaigns, in particular as in the 2004 European parliament elections, that does not change the fact that political participation of Europe's Muslims is still far from being occupied with important trends, such as taking part in setting agendas in the societal and political arenas, as in what most active public parties seek to do.

This, however, does not mean that there were no attempts or experiences in Europe's Muslim communities, but clearly the general aspect is that their interaction with the political issue seems closer to seasonal performance and reactions, both of which are not continuous or stable. There is a need for an established institutional platform that handles political work as in consultations, services institutions, research and study centres, think tanks and effective "interest groups" as well as legal bodies whose voices are heard. Nonetheless, the importance of reactions or irregular movements or seasonal acts to revive Muslims' political participation cannot be ignored.

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Looking into the future, it can be said that available indicators point to the emergence of more stable forms of political participation of Muslims in Europe and the surface of institutions that are vital to reinforce that participation and are based on a growing feeling of the need of a more competent and influential interaction in the political issue by force of the relevant experiences and shocks experienced by Europe's Muslims over the past years.

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As for the political arena in Eastern Europe, it has been restructured due to two factors, the first being the fall of the communist regimes and the second being the reformation of the political map in that part of the continent along

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It is important that the culture of peaceful objection is developed in European Muslim communities. This culture grows through freedoms of speech and draws its powers from the will of the audience and their awareness of the reality and challenges it entails. It is taken for granted that developing the culture of peaceful objection should go inline with reinforcing good citizenship amongst Muslims in Europe, and peaceful objection does not mean working in isolation from the society, but to interact with it in the frame of a Muslim identity that goes in harmony with the present reality.

In addition to the fact that no society can do without it, spreading the culture of peaceful objection can trigger a number of benefits to Muslim minorities in Europe. It prevents the growth of inferiority complexes amongst the young Muslim generations in Europe and helps them to honestly express their feelings. One of the alternative options would be to encourage extremism which has serious repercussions especially that peaceful objection can prevent violence accompanied by wrath.

Peaceful objection also crystallizes vital issues in the society that Muslim minorities should live and interact with, which consequently will elevate the preoccupations of these minorities and at the same time channels the energy of their youths into fruitful cooperative actions.

Successful peaceful objection requires mingling in the society's activities which eventually protects Muslim minorities from fears of isolation and encourages building trust with their partners. On the other hand, peaceful objection is a "means of bonding with the crowds" as well as a chance to polish public leadership and strengthen communication between politicians and citizens.

This is in regards to objection as a mechanism, but investing in it should be accompanied by an open speech that does not lean towards extremism or fanaticism in the choice of phrases or in its general outlines. Isolation in public activities and limiting it to Muslim communities only or marginal groups does not rise to the aspired role, in addition to the negative repercussions that might follow.

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Europe's Muslims might have been able to contribute to the interaction with the political issue in many cases, such as in the series of protests that took Europe by storm in the first half of 2002 to condemn the war campaign carried

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It is unexpected that recessions in Europe's Muslims' rights and freedoms would directly benefit reinforcing participation; but it might move a sector of Muslim audience who feel the importance of their interaction with the political issue and making their voices heard.

In addition to the watchful role underlying the transgressions and recessions and sharp stances besides the strong reactions they incite, the political level in Europe has felt its need for "dialogue partners" from the Muslim community whom they can deal with in light of an increase in concerns related to the Muslim issue.

It is more likely that this would benefit political and societal participation of Muslims in Europe due to the need to form frameworks that would reflect their needs. However, any attempt by authorities to intervene in one way or another in the formation of these frameworks or influence their course will not do participation any good, as a matter of fact it will surely cause harm to it.

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What draws attention in the political interaction of Europe's Muslims is that making comments on negative developments or crises has imposed itself on this interaction.

Accelerated developments and catastrophes uncover the size of pressures over the past years that Europe's Muslims, through their committees, public leaders, politicians and societies, felt that they had to go along with it, or comment on it or even try to influence its developments and ease its repercussions.

This might lead to an intensive media and political presence under crises, which is a burden in itself, but this has brought forward the growing role of parties that are supposed to represent Muslims in the media and political levels.

However, it is not accurate to consider this growing interest in media and politics as an increase in the ability to influence the media and political arenas, as it usually shows up under crisis and causes negative effects no matter how many secondary or accidental advantages this achieves. In addition to the fact that in many incidents this interest was coated in an apologetical tone, sometimes even a defensive one, in the ranks of Europe's Muslims and their institutions.

the presence of Muslim women wearing headscarf or women who show more appreciation of Islam on the political level.

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What can be noticed is that the mosque in Europe plays a role that cannot be ignored in public life and consequently in political life and participation. One of its most important roles in this field is encouraging the Muslim public to positively interact with societal and political participation, while referring to Islamic values. But the mosque's role in this arena which mostly comes from the contribution of Imams, speakers and lecturers, opinion and religious leaders in local Muslim communities should preserve a distance that separates it from the polarization in the political issue.

In the course of political participation of Europe's Muslims in its current state, the mosque gains most of its strength from its central post in Muslim gatherings in European countries, i.e. it is the centre of Muslims' societal activities on the local level, which consequently lures some politicians to reach out to mosques and their audience and woo Imams in several European countries, most commonly to gather votes and improve their parties image and sometimes to defuse tension in the same society when there is a crisis. This also tempts other politicians to target mosques in their policies and statements in several European countries, a case that is confirmed by numerous evidences in many European countries.

However, the mosque plays a vital role in fulfilling religious needs and some public interests (such as civil status issues) and expressing their interest on the political level, whether directly or indirectly through specialized frameworks such as the mosque's unions, Imams councils, or Muslim religious panels.

The mosque is also expected to play a sufficient role in defusing crisis, to encourage understanding and communication in society.

On the other hand, the mosque has also become part of the problems related to Muslim presence in Europe, not only due to the wrong handling or lack of wisdom to what is preached on some pulpits or what allegedly takes place in some mosques and Islamic centres, but also in a wider and more important context in the attempts to incite against Muslim presence in Europe and target the central points in this presence, topped by the mosque or Islamic centre.

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If it was familiar to hear some criticism that Muslims in Europe do not interact with election seasons or cast their votes, then this case should be looked at in the context of the whole society that is witnessing a phenomenon of lack of interest in voting.

There are many factors, which can be entwined at times, that can be responsible for the lack of interest by Muslim, who are eligible to vote, in casting their ballots in election seasons. It is noticed here that these factors are not limited to Muslims. They are linked to a number of public sectors in the wide society. The issue is associated with procedural and technical reasons, as well as religious and ideological reasons and others linked to criticism and indignation and the recession in the political arena and belief in the difficulty to reinforce it. Another reason behind low voting is also the lack of awareness amongst individuals and groups about the importance of their votes and the need for encouraging options to vote for as well as the distrust in political parties. Other reasons include some political parties' position from Muslims' interests and Islamic affairs or "Islamophobia" and the belief amongst some voters that the results have been rigged in addition to the lack of interest in public affairs.

It should be mentioned here that the presence of some Muslim candidates who enjoy a reasonable degree of competency, respect and trustworthiness amongst the public audience would increase the percentage of Muslim voters who cast their ballots. What would also encourage Muslims to cast their votes is when competing lists attend to what is of interest to Muslim voters. Then election campaigns should address the Muslim public directly while taking into account the language barrier if necessary, which is on the rise in some European countries.

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With the general rise in Muslim political participation in Europe, the presence of Muslim women is noticeable at times on both the political and public arenas. In several cases headscarf is also present in this participation. The presence of Muslim women in the political field is not a rare scene, as many women who originally came from Muslim countries have made strides in political parties in several European countries and won parliamentary seats not only locally but even in the European Parliament itself, equally to the number of Muslim men in many cases. But the new indicator in this field is

This is the general outline of Muslim experiences in most European countries, as it seems far fetched that Muslims achieve an outstanding presence on the nationwide level while overstepping the local political participation.

In some countries, political participation on the local level gains a bigger weight from what it is in other European countries, like the situation in federal countries such as Germany or Belgium, and it is even stronger in Switzerland, due to the nature of the Swiss political system that provides a larger ground for cantons within the range of the confederal union.

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Political participation within the local level should be able to act as an additional safety valve for Muslim minorities in Europe especially when the national or central political performance entails certain transgressions, or undermines Muslims or ignores their interests. But the opposite can also be said, considering that the national or federal or even the European levels can act as the safety valve for any assumed transgressions that take place in the local level.

In a word, political and public participation for Muslims on the local level is gaining great importance and involves some sensitivities, thus it is required to make additions and reinforce interests as well as prevent possible damage.

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Europe's Muslims experiences in reinforcing the public participation have varied, one of which was the formation of specialized committees to supervise the direct political work or organize it. In general, it can be said that these experiences might not have been continuous or stable on the time frame, but they were feasible in so many aspects, most importantly that they offered highly appreciated services in some political peak seasons.

Even if one of them diminishes, then another experience is born, maybe even a more mature one. What is certain is that experiences emerge and diminish but common experiences could open up new horizons.

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It is difficult to say that Muslims cast their votes in this European country or that based on a clear political vision or even a blurry one. But still, Muslims participation in elections seasons is an important demand to achieve public awareness in this area which is open to development and guidance at a later stage.

emergence of a crisis against the Muslim presence in Europe, in addition to the contradicting views, visions and actions while dealing with Muslims and minorities. This is also followed by the changes that took place on the state of the historic Muslim presence in Eastern Europe and the relative shift in the political culture in European countries towards reinforcing the idea of citizens' participation in the political issue, as well as the acceleration in the European integration and the rise in the realisation of identity and the Islamic characteristic amongst Europe's Muslims.

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As to its general aspects, Europe's Muslims political participation mostly seemed to acquire the impression of irregular performance that is not based on steady programmes or settled tools. And despite the increasing participation over the past few years, the overall result of this experience remains humble and mostly below the standard that is known in the public and political arenas in the countries of the continent, but varying from one place to the other. And still, indicators point to a rise in Muslim's political participation, which is an accelerated growth in some countries and territories. This growth is expected to be quantitative more than it being qualitative; i.e. in the size of their presence in the fields that are related to political influence, as in the number of Muslims casting their votes or running for elections on the parties lists and the number of parliamentarians, members of the municipality councils and the number of statements issued. We are still waiting for a change in the qualitative areas of participation which can provide them with bigger influence (like the quality of political performance, the quality of statements and connections with the political arena, etc).

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Muslims political participation in the local level, like the local councils, districts or associations, forms an important ground from which they can expand their political participation. Europe's Muslims, to tell the truth, have been achieving an increased presence on the local political level in their countries, while their nationwide participation is still relatively meagre. In general, Europe's Muslims have been represented by more faces on the local political level than the national and continental political levels.

It is not unlikely that the political participation of Europe's Muslims will take a wider path which kicks off from the local level to what is above, i.e. the power centre in municipalities and districts as well as associations, can stand out before the Muslim political presence on the nationwide level is reinforced.

Europe, who reflect the whole minority, is pro-political participation and sees its importance, despite some hesitant opinions of taking part in actual participation.

Nevertheless, the Muslim arena included other opinions of political participation; some rejected and even prohibited it, but these stances remained on the edge in this continent.

In general, it is clear that the Muslim presence in Europe, along with most of the Islamic institutions, opinion leaders and Imams, prefer to continue in the path of societal and political participation. We mean here the stances that stem from Islamic doctrines or try to go side by side with it. This does not deny the fact that the shaping stages that the Muslim community went through, and is still undergoing, does not put political and societal participation as a priority that it set to itself in this stage or the other.

Thus, we can classify the stances of Europe's Muslims of political participation into a category that is clearly pro political participation, another that does not reject it but is hesitant to join it, and a third that clearly rejects it or at least rejects some aspects of the direct political participation.

What should be noticed here is that the position of some Muslim groups that prohibit Muslims in the West from taking part in all stages of elections will cause a full isolation of Muslims instead of them interacting with the societies they live in, in case this stance is followed by Muslims which is very unlikely. What drew anger and sorrow amongst Muslims is that some Muslim groups in some European countries have interfered in all possible means to prevent Muslims from being part of the political arena and positively intermingle with it.

In general, it is likely that some Muslim reserved stances to democracy will reflect on the possibility to reach coordination and cooperation within the Muslim presence in European countries.

(12)

The political participation of Muslims in Europe is closely linked to a group of developments, accompanying circumstances and backgrounds that can be referred to in general as the historic circumstance.

We can identify most of the dimensions marking this historic circumstance through a relationship marked with historic burdens between the Islamic and Western worlds and a continuous trust crisis between the two civilisations. Of the other dimensions are the demographic factor and the

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To realise how the windows of political participation are narrowed, we should take into consideration that the diversity traced in the societal reality of the European countries does not reflect similarly on the societal participation arena, as pluralism is further narrowed in the political participation arena. As for the higher levels of decision making, it looks more harmonious and far from reflecting the state of the societal pluralism. In the light of this reality, the chances to rise, the selection criteria and the potencies of social and political prominence play decisive roles to keep or even further the situation.

This problem, which varies from one environment to the other, entails a major challenge to the Muslim presence in Europe and their opportunity to an active participation in the public and political participation. To date, Europe's Muslim do not have significant chances for a tangible presence in the elite circles, especially in West and central Europe, even with the presence of a noticeable percentage of Muslims in some highly regarded careers such as doctors and engineers in several European countries.

This might bring to mind a moral role that Europe's Muslims should undertake when taking part in political and social arenas which is to try to bridge the gap that separates the elite from reality, especially by guaranteeing the approach of "being close to citizens" who should be represented by social activists and Muslim politicians and their partners. This is a demand that is consistent with the Islamic values and doctrines.

(10)

It should be noted that encouraging Muslims and other minorities to take part in political participation is a responsibility that falls on the shoulders of active parties, leaders and institutions, in the minority itself on one part and on the shoulders of the parties controlling the political system in the related environment; in European countries, on the other hand, in addition to the entire society so as to realize the concept of fruitful partnership and cooperation.

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It is possible to classify the stances of Muslims in Europe, whether institutions, gatherings, opinion leaders and public characters towards political participation in several categories mainly falling under those "in favour of" "in opposition to" and "hesitant" of the idea. But the mainstream Muslims in

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In general it can be said that the present state of Europe's Muslims is still a witness to the lack of political tools that are equal to the situation in the European arena, whether it is in European countries and territories, each separately, or the general European level. And still, one cannot ignore the qualitative growth that some European arenas witnessed over the past years. However, the general situation is still below the standard that can seriously be relied on. The cases have proven that Europe's Muslims in General and those in some European environments in specific clearly lack the tools of active public and political participation that is capable of dealing with the nature of the arena they move in. This can be attributed to the nature of the Muslim presence in itself in the country or territory and its capabilities and to objective circumstances related to the environment.

(8)

Some European elite cast the doubt on the efficiency of political participation of common citizens. Several books and panels have expressed that thought and addressed the aspects of the problem. Some even suggested solutions to deal with it while others expressed their ideas in a distressed tone that might look biased at times, about the state of the political system in European environments.

The political participation of Europe's Muslims involves two problems, one of which they share with their counterparts in the wide society and another related to their being part of minorities most commonly, and their general status in most Western and central European countries is linked to immigration even though many successive generations have grown-up and developed in European countries.

In regard to Muslims in Europe, the bright expectations of "the democratic environment" and "freedom" that Muslim immigrants brought with them to Europe started to be gradually shaken in some of the environments they lived in. And with time, this bright image of the political situation they carried in their minds started to dissolve.

The shock of 9/11 disturbed some beliefs on this subject amongst some Muslims in Europe, some of whom started to fear for their rights and gains in a democratic environment.

These difficulties intertwine, but that varies relatively from one European environment to the other which constantly obliges us to take into consideration the existing differences so as not to fall into generalisations.

The strict abidance by the logic of the majority and minority in political life causes many problems and unfolds precautions at the practical level, which gives an additional importance to the minorities interest to advance into the societal and political arenas and reinforce their presence there and remain alert to any bad signs that might loom over as well as to defend their rights without disturbing societal peace or violating relevant norms and regulations.

Of the obstacles that have faced and is facing societal and political participation of Europe's Muslims, although varying from one country to the other, which is circling around individuals, a state that can usually be seen amidst the first generation of the immigrant Muslims. What happened in many cases was nothing but the "formation" of institutions that are based on individual leadership, an imitation of some institutional features and not necessarily a sober move to institutionalism. This obstacle emerges as experience is centred amongst a small number of people and a few people hold the keys of influence and head the public scene of the Muslim's presence in the societal and political arenas. This has reflected on the cohesion in the Muslim arena at times and on the competency of their societal and political participation, for certain. It has also passed on a tangible problem on communication between the generations. Sometimes, that seemed as a preferable state amongst some political parties in the European arena that see in that person a comfortable choice.

One of the most important difficulties ruling the chances of political participation of Europe's Muslims is linked substantially to their peculiar position which resides in the absence of institutional platforms that allow them a mature political activism that is capable of providing them with the local political experiences and the tools to rise and gain support, which they were barred from in most European environments. Such context reveals the problematic lack of indispensable institutional frameworks in the course of active political action or the efficient handling of the political arena in the European environment by institutions of research and studies; influential rights watch organizations; pressure and action groups, interests expression as well as political upgrading frameworks and others.

societal or political act based on the “isolation” concept will contradict with the soul of societal or political “participation.”

And from here, there is no escape from seeking to expand in all sectors of the societal action and building alliances and partnerships and strengthening cooperation and coordination with the active partners in the political and societal environment as well as building on common grounds and getting inspiration from by Islamic directives while taking into consideration the different standards and restraints.

There should be vigilant handling of the concept of “acting within the limits of the law” or “respecting laws”. That remains a requirement and an important commitment that the Muslims of Europe should abide by, which does not mean taking the societal and political action of Europe’s Muslims and their partners and allies out of the arena of influence and action which is necessary for continuous development of the legal body through filling any related gaps.

What remains to be said is that linking societal and political participation is an option that cannot be substituted for Europe’s Muslims in particular. And political activity has limits that get their explanation from the current status of the civil arena under which it is unexpected that Europe’s Muslims will find in political participation an effective recipe to improve their status.

(5)

If the attention is focused on the extent that Europe’s Muslims interact with the general political arena then it should not escape the mind that Muslims’ political action goes through unexpected paths due to the political interaction amongst Muslims living in the same European country or Muslims in Europe as a whole.

And although that is not tangible in several European countries, it is an existing reality in some of them. We can come to the conclusion that the issue of Muslim representation is one that does not lack a political trait. As a matter of fact this issue might be overwhelmed by this trait due to several subjective and objective circumstances.

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It is not a secret that the participation of Muslims on the political arena faces several obstacles, some due to the general difficulties in the societal context and others linked to minorities or those who are classified as “foreigners,” in addition to difficulties stemming from their being Muslims.

(3)

Political participation cannot be isolated from the societal participation in general. As the political participation remains a part of the societal participation in its broader concept, there is no doubt that the relationship between the political and societal participation is a dialectic one; the more the group of people or minority takes part in the society, the higher their chances are to an effective political participation. The lower this level becomes, the lesser their chances are to an efficient political participation. The political participation in itself reflects positively on developing societal participation in its wider concept and motivating the group or minority to be part of it.

Despite the importance of realizing the political action through the societal action in general and despite the importance of tackling the political participation through the societal participation, political participation, to be more accurate, means reaching a political goal through that performance. This participation embodies the free performance by citizens to influence decision making on the numerous levels of the political regime.

Realizing how entangled is the political participation and the overall public participation is very essential to comprehend some characteristics of movement and steadiness in society and politics. As for the instruments, it seems that the public activity is an irreplaceable approach to political transformation especially that some aspects of this activity can be read as a direct or indirect political participation.

(4)

Of the important demands that merge from the horizon of participation is the trend to diversify the options for political and societal activity and tools. It is inevitable that the societal and political participation of Europe's Muslims benefits from the overall choices of action and tools of influence within the legal and moral rules, and through a wise estimation of the good and bad. On the other hand, depending on certain options in isolation of the overall requirements of the civil interaction might waste a lot of interests and will most probably prompt numerous transgressions at the expense of Europe's Muslims even in an environment surrounded by legal legislations and moral obligations.

This is followed by the dangers of taking action in isolation from the overall civil texture, i.e. that the minorities appear isolated from "the society of the majority" and exposed in an uneven equation. It is indisputable that any

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The main goals of the aspired political participation of Europe's Muslims can be identified as:

1. The positive influence in political decision making, legislatively and in practice, while reinforcing a moderate balance in the European political life and containing any negative attitudes or potential radical inclinations.

2. Safeguarding the Muslim existence, including the Islamic religious aspects, from any transgressions that might target it, while preventing any attempts of marginalisation and discrimination, and seeking to reinforce equal opportunities in the same society.

3. Continuous improvement of the positive general presence of Muslims in the society and in handling the political level with all the efforts it requires. This is followed by providing an encouraging and conducive climate to Muslims so they can express their visions and opinions in public.

4. Protect the interest of the Muslim minorities in Europe in a way that would go in line with the related Islamic directives and reinforce, at the same time, the general interest of European societies and support coexistence and inner harmony and understanding.

5. To take care of the demands of Europe's Muslims while taking into consideration the established legal, cultural, social and political rights and seeking to win the understanding of the public and political parties.

6. To express Muslims' vision and stances on public affairs and politics in the European state of affairs, and on the issues related to Muslims or the Islamic affairs in particular.

7. To ensure that all frameworks and legal, political and procedural systems are achieved to guarantee the best state that regulates the relationship with Muslim groups in European countries on the local and regional levels in addition to the supra-regional and the European general levels.

8. To spread awareness amongst Muslims in Europe of their rights, duties and responsibilities in the frame of the general state of affairs in their European societies in a way that strengthens their political awareness and develops their aptitude for an active political and social role.

9. To find efficient channels to create links between the political arena in Europe on all levels and the European Muslim minorities. There is no doubt that good political participation can provide such channels that are indispensable in a pluralistic society.

(1)

The political participation describes the free action carried out by the public to influence decisions taken on the different levels of the political system. That is to say that what is meant by this participation is to reach a political goal.

Pertaining to Europe's Muslims, this participation should be the consensus of the participation of the entire Muslim community, which comes without compromising its nature. But the status of Muslims in society does not mean that they should melt in this society or lose their identity under the pretext that they are integrated in the general social fabric.

As for the political participation of Europe's Muslims, it does not mean "the Islamic participation" in the European political arena, or that this participation is based on the Islamic doctrines as some might think. But such participation should be in reasonable harmony with the nature of the European political environment that does not contradict the Islamic values, guidance and instructions. Moreover, it should be inspired by these values and Muslim instructions with its positive nature that does not separate it from its surroundings.

In this respect it is necessary to differentiate between "the political participation of Europe's Muslims" as a case stemming from reality, and that aspired practice as a perfect state or something close to that.

This participation of course aims at achieving appropriate presence in this arena on the basis of healthy interaction with fellow citizens from other political and societal parties, which is not an easy demand anyway.

The political participation of Europe's Muslims in general is to embody their positive and fruitful interaction with the political arena in all possible ways, in a way that goes with the nature of European arena and is also inspired by the Islamic guidance.

Thus we can say that the political participation of Europe's Muslims in a general perspective, embodies good citizenship in European communities, and the ensuing roles that need to be developed in all fields, including the political aspects, and pertinent to domestic and foreign policies.

The basic precept that renders specific practices in the field of the political participation of Europe's Muslims acceptable is the necessity to adhere to the relevant Islamic, legal, moral and ethical criteria and directives.

Among the issues addressed here is the political participation under “crisis” and how these crises reflect on the participation as well as how European Muslims react to the demand of managing consecutive crises. The conclusion tackles the notion of “the culture of peaceful objection.”

The status and dimensions of political participation for Muslims in Eastern Europe are also emphasized, especially after the changes in the political system in that part of the continent. The nature of political participation of Eastern Europe’s Muslims will be approached with focus on how it was distinguished from the general European drive.

The next issue in the discussion is the comparison between the political stances in different areas, through domestic and foreign policies.

Then an answer to the broad question “how should this participation be?” is proposed in an attempt to investigate ways of improving participation experiences of Europe’s Muslims. Here the concept of wide political participation for Europe’s Muslims is presented and is meant to achieve their positive interaction with the political strata in different ways in a manner that goes with the nature of the European arena and that is also inspired by Islamic directives. Along these lines, there will be the attempt to identify the general guidelines for this participation, recognising its main objectives in addition to its techniques.

Introduction

The political participation of Europe's Muslims is addressed here by looking into its reality and the ways to develop and rise with it.

At the beginning the concept of European Muslim's political participation and the complications linked to it are introduced, as well as the nature of relationship between societal and political participation.

Then tracking the aspects of the political participation through three coherent levels is suggested, moving from the particular to the wider concept, from the direct political participation level to the public political participation level then to societal participation in general.

Also, the challenges and difficulties facing the political participation are discussed, some attributed to general difficulties related to the society, others related to minorities or who are classified as "foreigners", in addition to difficulties related to the fact that they are Muslims. These difficulties are entangled and entwined, varying from one European area to another, which entails to notice and take into consideration the existing variations and difference to avoid generalisations.

Then the stances of European Muslims from political participation are addressed. This can be put into categories, a group that is clearly pro-political participation, another that does not reject it but is hesitant to go into it, and a third that is clearly against it or rejects some aspects of direct political participation at least.

This is followed by an elaboration attempting to describe the reality of political participation of Europe's Muslims as this participation is closely linked to a number of developments, backgrounds and circumstantial factors, mainly historic circumstances.

manifestations that brought distances closer, then one of the standards that can be used to separate between them is to determine the options of “citizenship” in its general meaning and the nature of the overall societal action so that the political participation is equal to the will to settle and interact with the public life. It should be noticed here that interaction with the political arena in Europe might also be triggered by wanting to participate in the foreign political matters as in the attempt to influence the foreign policies in a certain issue.

This matter remains one of the introductions to this broad and manifold issue; and hopefully it will contribute to shedding the light on some of its aspects to those interested.

It is not a secret that the European political arena in particular and the democratic systems as a whole are based on the interaction between the societal and political ends as well as the attraction between those who hold similar interests, all taking place under the umbrella of law and regulations. This means that negative or marginal performance will cause an imbalance and have negative outcomes. It will also reflect a lower public turnout of the isolated group which will not facilitate the aspired active role for Muslims of Europe on the basis of “good citizenship”.

When one believes in the common ground of a society that accommodates Muslims and non-Muslims then what draws attention also is the common ways of handling a group of challenges and difficulties and the available options to overcome the moral and actual boundaries and to surmount the invisible barriers in the same society or to break them apart. In fact these difficulties, gaps and risks only strengthen the justifications behind the political participation of Muslims and affirm the need to it. They prove its importance as well as indicate one of the basic actions anticipated of this participation which is to strengthen the social links between Muslims and the societies they live in and to melt worries and fears and fill gaps, deep at times, and open windows of opportunity for the new generations of European Muslims who live in societies that are hoped to back the choice of providing equal opportunities to everyone in all fields.

It should be noted that attention is focussed here on general matters, both major and minor, that are related to the issue of political participation of Europe’s Muslims; therefore preoccupation with the technical aspects of this participation on the practical level is being intentionally avoided.

More efforts are also needed to address the bigger questions regarding the meaning, nature, ways and consequences of participation, as well as the diagnosis of the current participation by pointing out the difficulties, gains, chances and challenges that form a reality replete with new developments.

The issue brought in focus here addresses the participation in the European political arena whether on the local, regional or continental level. And often it does not include participation in politics that involve the former countries from which “yesterday’s immigrants” came, just like it is for some political activities carried out by political refugees in Europe. When it becomes difficult to identify separating lines between the two mentioned types, especially with the phenomena called “globalization” and its

Foreword

The political participation of Europe's Muslims is no longer a marginal matter. In fact there has been an increased interest in it amidst experiences that have taken place long ago and attempts to rise in the political field.

It is unarguable that political participation is not limited to election campaigns and mobilizing seasonal votes, it is of a deeper concept and a wider scope. And dealing with it separately from a wider vision of full societal participation will only be taking it out of its concept.

It might seem to some that questions regarding the societal and political participation of Europe's Muslims put forth today or that will be issued tomorrow is of a complicated nature. Each query has elements whose backgrounds and nature should be thoroughly studied and premeditated.

Even the hope we get of the gains to the Muslim presence in the European continent out of their participation in the political arena is put aside when a thorough look brings out the challenges and difficulties that cannot be ignored or overlooked. In fact through the experiences in the last few years in particular, a person will come to a conclusion that political developments are linked in the eye of a European Muslim to seasons of crisis and storms of arguments. Each of which forms a curve that determines the political and public beat, according to overwhelming developments or accelerated changes.

This brings back to mind that political participation is not expected to achieve interests or make gains only, but to push away detriments and avoid obstacles. Thus losing interest will not be the only loss as a result of neglecting political participation of European Muslims but also the possibility of unwanted developments or the deterioration of uncomfortable situations which already exist without finding anyone to curb and contain them.

Hossam Shaker

**Muslims of Europe
and their
Political Participation**

**Features of Reality
and Options for Development**

Brussels, March 2007